

# Special Needs Shelter Just-in-Time Training for Non-Medical Personnel: Guide

Montgomery County, Maryland  
Advanced Practice Center for Public Health Preparedness and Response

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## Background

In 2009 Montgomery County, Maryland, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) entered the final stages of its Alternative Care Site (ACS) planning process. Staffing of ACSs continues to be one of the major sticking points to the plan and after much discussion it was determined that Montgomery County DHHS medical staff may not be available to assist with alternative care sites, they may be detailed to other duties associated with public health surge (e.g., mass countermeasure response efforts, information line, and continuity of operations) and that ACSs with limited medical staff needed to be explored. Staffing of ACSs has been identified as a major challenge of other local health departments and their partners and with this in mind Montgomery County DHHS explored staffing options.<sup>1</sup>

In order to meet the needs of our residents during an emergency event, Montgomery County DHHS developed a Shelter Care Site System that involves three levels of care. The system can expand or contract depending upon the type of event and available resources. This allows Montgomery County DHHS to utilize non-medical staff wherever possible for large scale events. This system continues to be a work in progress and at the time of publication, has not been finalized. The draft levels of care are as follows:

*Level I (basic shelters)*-a mass shelter at a school, other facility or hotel/motel depending upon the type and size of the event. The shelter is managed in concert with the American Red Cross and would primarily serve individuals who require only basic care.

*Level II (special needs shelters)*-a “step-up” from the basic shelter and would open during emergency events when necessary to assist with hospital surge. The specific county facility used for a Level II shelter will depend upon the type of emergency event that has occurred. According to Montgomery County’s draft plan this type of shelter would serve as our alternative care site. The special needs shelter may serve the following:

- Individuals with disabilities/special needs who cannot be managed at home or in a general shelter during a disaster. Guidance for appropriate referrals to the ACS is provided for general shelter personnel in Appendix A.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Public Health Preparedness (2007). *Mass medical care with scarce resources: A community planning guide*. Chapter 6: Alternative care sites. Retrieved from <http://www.ahrq.gov/research/mce/mce6.htm>.

- Low-acuity hospital patients who need further monitoring of vital signs (every 8 – 12 hours) and status prior to discharge to home.
- Low-acuity hospital patients who may be discharged but are homeless.
- Individuals with similar injury or illness, whose conditions are not complicated by acute or chronic medical conditions.
- Individuals with a common communicable disease who may be housed together. For example, individuals ill with influenza.

*Level III (hospital/ hospital surge)*-Individuals will be referred to hospitals. These individuals require medical care that is beyond the scope of services of a special needs shelter. Local hospitals may need to expand their medical services; this is reflected in their local emergency plans.

### **Training Purpose**

The goal of this training is to develop a just-in-time template for local health departments to train non-medical staff for duties associated with a special needs shelter (Level II).

At the end of this just-in-time training each participant will be able to:

- Recognize the layout of the facility
- Define their job expectations
- Demonstrate how they fit into the operation
- Apply basic safety and problem solving techniques

### **Training Summary**

The Special Needs Shelter Just-in-Time Training for Non-Medical Personnel was developed by Montgomery County, Maryland DHHS. Montgomery County's Advanced Practice Center for Public Health Preparedness and Response (Montgomery APC) created a version of the training that can be modified by other local health departments. The training incorporates techniques as outlined in *Enhancing Training During Public Health Emergencies: An Inclusive Just-in-Time Training Approach* developed by Multnomah County APC.

The training includes the following components:

- [\*Training manual\*](#)-to be used by the trainer, it can be modified to suit the needs of the local health department. The estimated time of the training is between 22-26 minutes, but can be adjusted.
- [\*Training\*](#)-available in PowerPoint, but can be printed out for participants.
- [\*Job Action Sheet \(sample\)\*](#)-this is the job action sheet that Montgomery County, Maryland uses in their training. This may need to be modified to meet the needs of the local health department.

- [\*Site Layout \(sample\)\*](#)-this is a sample site layout, each local health department will need to create their own based upon their shelter and alternative care site plans.

### **Evaluation Process**

Montgomery County DHHS piloted the Special Needs Shelter Just-in-Time Training for Non-Medical Personnel in September 2010 with non-medical DHHS personnel and non-medical community volunteers. The training assumed that personnel and volunteers had participated in a general shelter training provided by DHHS and that this just-in-time training was taking place onsite at a special needs shelter. The participants were provided with a scenario prior to the training. All participants completed an evaluation at the end of the training.

Participants agreed or strongly agreed that the training helped them understand their role at a special needs shelter, helped them feel confident that they could perform the duties at a special needs shelter, met the training objectives, and was appropriate for their learning style. Some requested that the length of the training was too short and wanted extra time for questions and answers. Overall participants were pleased with the training.

### **Contact Information**

For more information about this tool or any other Montgomery APC tool please contact:

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